

2013 Letters About Literature Level 2 Honorable Mention

William Wagner's letter to Roy Blount, Jr., author of *Alphabet Juice*

Dear Mr. Blount,

I love words. I've loved them for as long as I can remember. That's why I bought Alphabet Juice soon after it came out. I really enjoyed it, and still flip to a random page and read about a word or two every night before I go to sleep. Your book has given me an even greater love and respect for words and the English language and inspired me to learn even more.

I always saw words as sort of like a code that everybody knows. Your book taught me that words aren't just random symbols strung together that happen to have meaning. Words are fancy grunts and gestures, aged over time to mean precise things that can only be expressed a few ways. Over thousands of years, words were made, stretched, squished, clipped, stuck together, turned inside out, and switched around to get where they are today and will be tomorrow.

You've taught me that words should mean what they sound like, and sound like what they mean. The purest form of language is words that sound, look, or act like their definition. I never thought of how the p in 'stop' makes you want to stop, or how 'go' makes you want to start up again until I read your book. Words are like music, dance, or art. They aren't direct representations of reality; sometimes they're the opposite. But they always get the point across, in the most amazing way possible.

The fact that words are not just spoken but also written is so important, that without it almost all languages would be different. But because people can talk, words that don't sound like their meaning just don't work, and eventually get changed until they do work, or just get disused into oblivion.

With emails, newspapers, books, and more, words inspire how we act today. But how we acted thousands of years ago, today, and every time in between inspires the existence of words as we know them.

Without Alphabet Juice, I'd probably still love words. But I wouldn't have the same appreciation and respect for them as I do now. Thank you for writing such an inspiring and enlightening book.

Sincerely,

William Wagner